



Parshas Eikev 2022, fear & love

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

This Parsha Perspective is in the memory of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's father, Reb Levi Yitzchak Schneerson. His Yahrzeit was this Wednesday, the 20th of Av.

He was an immense Torah scholar and Kabbalist who gave his life to preserving Judaism in the Soviet Union. In his honor, may we merit the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption!

Our Parsha continues with Moshe's final address to the Jewish people. He tells them that if they follow the Torah's path and keep the Mitzvahs, they will be blessed above all Peoples. He reminds them that they did not inherit the land due to their righteousness. But because of the promise G-d made to our forefathers.

Moshe recounts how he broke the Luchos on his way down from Har Sinai when he saw them sinning with the Golden Calf. He also tells them the second paragraph of the Shema, where we are told the physical rewards we will receive for observing the Torah or the consequences if we don't, Heaven Forbid.

However, a question comes to mind: Moshe Rabbeinu tells us what G-d requests and desires from the Jewish people. (10:12) *"And now (children of) Israel, what does your G-d truly require of you? Only to fear him and walk in His path. To love Him and serve Him with all your heart and soul."*

Although this may seem simple, this simple request has been the lifelong struggle of every Jew. So why does Moshe make it seem so simple and easy?!

Rashi (*Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading commentary on the Torah*) gives a simple explanation. He answers that this is a simple ask with respect to G-d's love and compassion toward us. Moshe is saying that fearing G-d and following in His ways is the least we can do for Him. He has taken us out of Egypt, gave us the Torah, and protected us in the desert. Hence, in return, we use the path He set for us and act like His nation.

Rashi continues that the Talmud (Brachos 33b) learns from here that everything is in G-d's hands except for fearing and loving Him. Only we can invoke feelings of devotion and commitment towards our Creator. Therefore, Moshe emphasizes and highlights what's in our capacity and how we show gratitude to G-d.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, a Moroccan commentary and Kabbalist from the 18th century) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Moshe Rabbeinu is telling the Jewish people for eternity how to develop our relationship with G-d.

It is not by chance that we acquire a meaningful connection with G-d, but through trust and hard work. It begins by recognizing His greatness and following in His ways even if we don't understand.

But Moshe Rabbeinu says, the more we travel on G-d's roads, the more we see His light peering through the darkness. The more we see His kindness and compassion in every situation and circumstance. Hence, we start to be overwhelmed with emotions of affection, love, and praise for our Creator, the King of Kings.

The Ohr Hachaim continues that despite Moshe making this deep and real connection sound simple, nothing is more challenging in reality. To love and cherish a G-d that allowed pain and suffering to plague our history. That seemingly enables evil to thrive while the moral and virtuous are overrun. Belief and trust in G-d is the biggest challenge we have always faced.

Yet Moshe Rabbeinu says this is the exact task we are charged with overcoming. Not only because G-d values our effort, but because we can truly prevail. Just as Ya'akov Avinu fought with an angel and won, we can beat our challenges.

As an inheritance from our forefathers, we are given the ability to succeed, prosper and grow despite the issues we face. To surpass the immense darkness seemingly blinding all others and see the light of G-d in our daily lives.

The Ohr Hachaim's powerful lesson was practiced by Reb Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the Rebbe's father. Although in exile and physically weak, Reb Levi Yitzchak never stopped helping people. Whether they were seeking his holy advice or looking for food, he went above and beyond for his fellow Jews.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we not shy away from attempting to beat our struggles and challenges. There are only two results: overcoming our issues or learning how it could be done next time. But dodging and avoiding our problems will not solve them in the long run.

The perspective we gain from challenging ourselves to improve and refine our nature is invaluable. Even admitting that we can be better is a tremendous step toward our ultimate success.

"There is no challenge more challenging than the challenge to improve yourself."

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*